

USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT NEBRASKA

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Panhandle Community Services Receives USDA Rural Development Funds ***--Expansion of Resource Center Planned***

North Platte, Neb., January 30, 2001--The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development announced that \$350,000 in loan funds were provided to Panhandle Community Services (PCS). The funds will be directed to the expansion of PCS's health and family resource center located in Gering, Nebraska.

Approximately 11,758 square feet will be added to the east side of the existing PCS Health and Family Resource Center. This will allow the center to include a broadened primary health care area for physical and dental health, an early childhood development area, a special use area, and a telecommunications/video conferencing/telemedicine center.

Roberta Mues, rural development specialist for Nebraska USDA Rural Development stated that the resource center expansion is needed due to the tremendous amount of growth in the number of people served by PCS. The enlargement of the center will enable PCS to continue to provide affordable and accessible health and child care services.

Services that will be available with the center's expansion include: a dentist specializing in hospital dentistry enabling both adults and children to be assisted, previously dental care was available to children only; expanded treatment for medical complaints and exams, a diabetes control program, HIV/AIDS confidential testing and counseling, Alzheimer's/Dementia screening; integrated migrant services; and the development of distance learning, video conferencing, and telemedicine which will augment current community services in order to provide the rural area with more modern health care and training opportunities. The Early Childhood/Family Development Center will serve approximately 70 children and their families involved with Head Start, Early Head Start and Employment First programs. Also, training opportunities will be provided for community child care providers.

The USDA loan funds were provided through the USDA Rural Development Community Facility Loan Program. The term of the loan will be for 40 years at 5.00 percent interest.

The near \$1.4 million resource center expansion is a highly leveraged project. In addition to the USDA Rural Development monies, the Nebraska Department of Economic Development is contributing \$350,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds; an U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development EDI Special Project Grant of \$462,500 and a Peter Kiewit Grant of \$180,000 are being utilized with the balance of funds being provided by Panhandle Community Services.

USDA Rural Development is a credit arm of the U.S. Department of Agriculture whose mission is to provide financial assistance to rural communities who are unable to secure acceptable credit elsewhere for housing, community facilities, and business development. Assistance provided can be in the form of grants, direct loans, and guarantees on loans made by commercial lenders.

For additional information regarding USDA Rural Development Loan and Grant Programs contact Roberta Mues in the USDA Rural Development Office, 1202 S. Cottonwood North Platte, Neb. 69101; phone (308) 534-2360. Visit our website at www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne/.

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